

CHAPTER 7 WORKSHEETS

III. READING CRITICALLY

Read the following excerpt from *On Administrating the Empire*, written by Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII (905–959) to his son Romanus. Then answer the questions below.

Hear now, my son, those things of which I think you should not be ignorant, and be wise that you may attain to government. For I maintain that while learning is a good thing for all . . . yet it is especially so for you, who are bound to take thought for the safety of all, and to steer and guide the laden ship of the world. . . .

I conceive, then, that it is always greatly to the advantage of the emperor of the Romans to be minded to keep the peace with the nation of the Pechenegs and to conclude . . . treaties of friendship with them and to send every year to them from our side a diplomatic agent with presents . . . and to take from their side . . . hostages and a diplomatic agent, who shall come, together with the competent minister, to this city protected of god, and shall enjoy all . . . benefits and gifts suitable for the emperor to bestow.

This nation of the Pechenegs is neighbor to the district of Cherson [a Byzantine city in the Crimea], and if they are not friendly disposed toward us, they may make excursions and plundering raids against Cherson. . . .

So long as the emperor of the Romans is at peace with the Pechenegs, neither Russians nor Turks can come upon the Roman dominions by

force of arms, nor can they exact from the Romans large . . . sums in money and goods as the price of peace, for they fear the strength of this nation which the emperor can turn against them while they are campaigning against the Romans. For the Pechenegs . . . can easily come upon the country both of the Russians and of the Turks, and enslave their women and children and ravage their country. . . .

For each nation has . . . divergent laws and institutions, and should consolidate those things that are proper to it, and should . . . develop out of the same nation the associations for the fusion of its life. . . . Each nation also should marry . . . not with those of other race and tongue but of the same tribe and speech. For hence arise naturally harmony of thought . . . among one another . . . but alien customs and divergent laws are likely on the contrary to engender . . . quarrels and hatreds and broils. . . . Mark, too, that it is . . . for those who wish to govern lawfully . . . to have the glorious deeds of those who have ruled . . . righteously as noble pictures set up for an example to be copied. . . .

Adapted from: Charles T. Davis, ed. *The Eagle, the Crescent, and the Cross*. Vol. 1. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

1. Why did Constantine VII write this passage? _____
2. What strategy does Constantine VII suggest for handling the Pechenegs? Explain the reasoning behind the strategy. _____

3. What does Constantine VII indicate is a major problem for the empire? _____

4. What special Byzantine talent is illustrated by this account? _____

5. How would you evaluate the political philosophy expressed in the last paragraph? _____
